

November 14, 2001

Livestock and Seed Programs
Agriculture Marketing Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Stop 0249, Room 2092-S
Washington, DC 20250-0249

To Whom It May Concern:

I strongly support the introduction of irradiated foods, especially irradiated ground beef, as an additional option in the National School Lunch Program. This would offer a much higher level of food safety for certain products including ground or comminuted meat products.

I would like for you to consider a few facts that get obscured by rhetoric.

- (1). All the scientifically recognized leading health organizations (World Health Organization, the American Medical Association, the American Dietetic Association, the American Council on Science & Health, etc) have endorsed food irradiation.
- (2). This type of food preservation technology has been around for years and studied extensively. To my knowledge no other food preservation technology has been studied more extensively than irradiation. Many experts including, Dr. Michael Osterholm, the Director of the University of Minnesota - Center for Infectious Disease Research & Policy have stated more research has been done on irradiation than any other food processing technology including canning and freezing combined!
- (3). Consumer acceptance of irradiated ground beef is currently strong in the marketplace. Thousands of supermarkets are retailing irradiated ground beef at the present time. Irradiated ground beef is also available at several hundred restaurants and nationwide by mail order and home delivery.

We must reduce the danger of food-borne disease in foods where it is reasonable and economical. Along these lines, we have instituted other food preparation programs to address unacceptable food-borne hazard risks. Pasteurization was utilized to protect the public from consuming pathogens in raw milk under similar circumstances. Irradiation will do for ground beef and other foods what pasteurization has done for the dairy industry.

I encourage the USDA to move forward with food irradiation as an additional food safety option in the school lunch program.

Sincerely,



Rex D. Holt, D.V.M.